

Conference 2007

A report on the Bicultural Symposium

Bridgette Masters-Awatere

Kia ora koutou. I decided to submit the current paper as a way to say thank you to the large group of people in attendance at the bicultural stream at the national conference in late August that was held at Waikato University. It was their continued presence and participation that served as a catalyst and motivator for this paper. I'm conscious that while there was a large number of people in the symposium, there were other streams occurring at the same time, so I thought giving an overview of the success of the symposium would be a good way to let people know who the symposium went. However, before talking specifically about the symposium, I'd like to give mention to other events of the day...

The powhiri and opening were well attended. The speeches seemed to set people at ease; delegates seemed relaxed as the conference began. After morning tea people returned to the main theatre for the first keynote speaker (Professor Ted Glynn from the School of Education at Waikato). Ted spoke about the knowledge and experience he gained while undertaking teaching and research with Maori in the education sector. The prominent theme within his keynote presentation was the role of Non-Maori psychologists in examining the cultural assumptions they carry (whether knowingly or not) when working with Maori. Ted's presentation was followed later in the day by the second bicultural keynote speaker Linda Waimarie Nikora who shared with the audience her experience of the relationship psychology has with Maori culture; and with the narrative assistance of Professor Ngahua Te Awakotuku, privileged the audience by sharing moteatea from her whanau at Te Aitanga a Hauiti with them.

The first day of the conference saw a mixture of papers being presented from within the discipline of psychology. There were six streams of papers running concurrently; each under a paper theme: Health Psychology, Educational Psychology, Bicultural/Cross Cultural, Clinical and Miscellaneous. A scan of the programme would suggest some sub-disciplines were more successful at being involved with conference.

¹ The policy for NZPsS Annual Conference is that there are two bicultural Keynotes at every conference. While these presenters do not have to be Maori, they are generally nominated by the NSCBI and involve speakers presenting a paper that is aligned with Maori and/or indigenous interests within psychology.

But I digress as the purpose of this paper is to bring to the readerships' attention the success of the bicultural stream at national conference

The bicultural stream² was well attended, with the numbers for each of the 3 papers ranging between 60-70 people. People in attendance were from a broad range of areas within the discipline. Alongside the students from the different institutions, there were Industrial and Organisational, Clinical, Health, Media, Community, Education and Social Psychologists amongst the people

I recognised in the audience. Dr Ray Nairn, the current President³ of the New Zealand Psychological Society, was also present in the audience.

The first presenter was Karyn Okeroa McRae. Karyn is a descendent of both Tainui and Te Arawa Waka. Awards she has received in recognition of her study are the: Faculty of Social Science Honours Award 2006; James Ritchie Scholarship 2006; Faculty of Social Science Masters Award 2007; and the University of Waikato Maori Academic Excellence Award 2007. Karyn's presentation drew upon the work that she has completed thus far towards her Masters thesis entitled "Creating Cultural Capital: Public audience reaction to media representation of events associated with the passing of Te Arikinui Te Atairangikaahu." Karyn made reference to a range of cultural capital literature before moving on to present a comparison of the media representation at the passing of Former Prime Minister Norman Kirk and Dame Te Atairangikaahu.

The second presenter in the bicultural stream was Casey Rawiri. Casey has iwi connections to Ngati Porou and Ngati Kahungunu. Her scholarships include the: Karahipi Tumuaki Presidents Award 2006, FASS Masters Thesis Award 2006, Maori Education Trust Discretionary scholarship award 2006 and the Building Research Capability for the Social Sciences Masters Research award 2006. Casey's presentation about "Adolescent Maori Mothers Experiences" with social support during pregnancy, birth and motherhood, and their participation in education" drew upon the qualitative study she has been working on for her masters thesis at Waikato University.

The third, and final presenter in the bicultural stream, was Julie Wharewera-Mika who affiliates to Ngati Awa, Tuhoe and Te Whanau a Apanui iwi. As with the previous

² Dr Michelle Levy and I co-chaired the session.

³ I have rarely, apart from Keriata Paterson, seen the current President of the Society attend the bicultural presentations.

speakers, Julie too has been the recipient of a number of awards. Her awards that contribute to her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology are the: Henry Rongomau Bennett Memorial Scholarship (Clin Psych), Hauora 'Mori (Postgraduate) and the Karahipi Presidents scholarship 2006. Julie has also received other iwi grants from Omataroa Trust, Kiwinui Trust and Ngati Awa. Julie's presentation on "Mental health Impatient Services: improving our understanding of the needs for Maori when acutely unwell" considered a range of theoretical perspectives in light of her research with Te Whetu Tawera in Auckland.


The caliber of these presentations and the range of topics covered were such that it is great to see that a bicultural stream continues to provide a space for Maori centred topics to be discussed at conference. Having a bicultural stream has, to date, been dependent on individual submissions and the grouping of the scientific committee of papers into a bicultural stream. Under the present model of submission, the comments raised by Thomas and Thomas (2003) in their bicultural audit of the Society and again by Duirs (2005) in his search for bicultural policy still holds true; that it is because of the efforts of a dedicated few that the Society's bicultural commitment is actioned. Another point that Duirs (2005) raises is that a large amount of bicultural work occurs in the Society and the wider membership is unaware of such. I would like to encourage the membership to think of ways they can become active contributors to the development and implementation of Rule 3 of the Society (in this instance through conference) and how to enhance the sharing of such knowledge amongst the membership. The interchange of ideas around cultural matters will increase dramatically when the membership becomes actively engaged with the development of bicultural or culturally oriented papers.

Two suggestions I offer here are; 1) encouraging colleagues, students, staff to submit a paper that would be suitable to the bicultural stream; and 2) writing to the Executive and asking for a policy that ensures a continued place for bicultural papers at conference. But I'm confident that people will be able to engage in many ways.

References

Duirs, A. (2005). A search of the New Zealand Psychological Society records on cultural Initiatives Unpublished Community Psychology Placement Report, Psychology Department, University of Waikato.

Thomas, D. R., & Thomas, Y. (2003). Bicultural Audit of the New Zealand Psychological Society. Wellington: New Zealand Psychological Society.



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